



Newsletter

Press Wing, Prime Minister's Office

Issue: 10

October 2017

PM attends 72nd UNGA

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina attended the 72nd Session of the United Nations' General Assembly on 18-21 September 2017 in New York. She left Dhaka on 16 September and reached New York in the evening of the 17th.

The issue of the influx of Rohingyas from neighbouring Myanmar came up prominently in the engagements of the Prime Minister. She raised the Rohingya issue in every relevant event on the sidelines of the UNGA session.



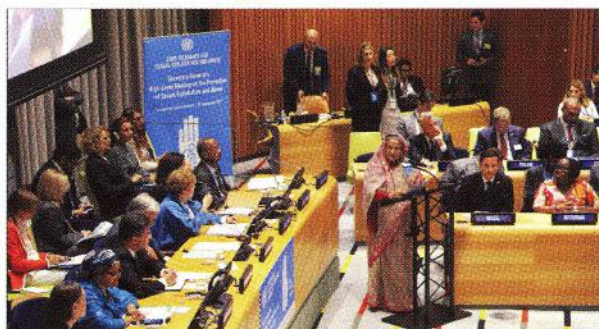
Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina addressing the OIC Contact Group meeting, UNHQ, New York, 20 September 2017.

On 18th September Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina attended a high level meeting on reform of the UN bodies at the invitation of US President Donald Trump. She also attended several other meetings, including High-level Meeting on the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, High-Level Follow-up meeting of Global Deal for Decent Work and Inclusive Growth, UN Secretary General's High Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment, High-level Side-event titled 'SDG Implementation, Financing and Monitoring: Sharing Innovations through South-South and Triangular Cooperation' organised by Bangladesh in partnership with UNDP and UN Office on South-South Cooperation (UN-OSSC),

Meeting with OIC

The Prime Minister has joined a Meeting of OIC Contact Group on Rohingya Muslim Minority. Presidents of Turkey and Iran along with other heads of the governments and states of Muslim countries also attended the meeting on 20 September. The Prime Minister narrated the plights of the Rohingyas fled to Bangladesh and urged the Muslim leaders to exert pressure on Myanmar government to stop persecution of Rohingyas and repatriate them with full dignity and security.

Attends High Level meetings

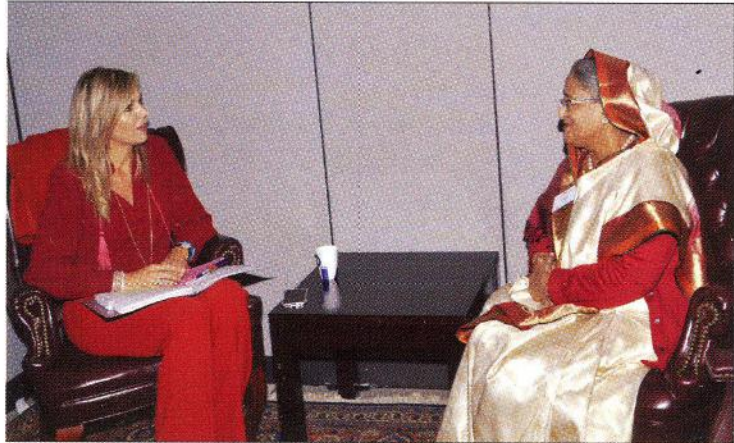


Meeting on the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, UNHQ, New York, 18 September 2017.

High-level Side-event titled “Creating a Policy Vision for SDG Finance: Facilitating Private Sector Investment in the SDGs” organised by Bangladesh and Canada in partnership with UNDP, Luncheon Roundtable Meeting organized by the Business Council for International Understanding (BCIU) and High-level Open Debate on UN peacekeeping issues.

Bilateral meetings

The Prime Minister held bilateral meetings with a number of heads of the government or state and Chiefs of UN bodies. They included Prime Minister of Bhutan Tshering Tobgay, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, Prime Minister of the Mauritius, Ms. Kersti Kaljulaid, President of Estonia, Queen Máxima of the Netherlands, Professor Claus Schwab, Executive Chairman of WEF, Ms. Virginia Marie Rometty, President, IBM, Mr. Hashim Thaçi, President of Kosovo, Sher Bahadur Deuba, Prime Minister of Nepal and António Guterres, UN Secretary General.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina holds bilateral meeting with Queen Máxima of the Netherlands, UNHQ, New York, 20 Sept. 2017

Myanmar to repatriate its nationals: PM

The Prime Minister took part in the general debate on the 21st September and delivered her speech in Bangla. Her speech was translated in English and other UN languages. In her address, Sheikh Hasina high-lighted different issues with special emphasis on Rohingyas. She earnestly called for ending the ‘ethnic cleansing’ in Myanmar. She said the crisis has its roots in Myanmar and its solution has to be found in Myanmar. In this regard, Sheikh Hasina made five proposals that include: (1) Myanmar must unconditionally stop the violence and the practice of ethnic cleansing in the Rakhine State immediately and forever; (2) Secretary General of the United Nations should immediately send a Fact-Finding Mission to Myanmar; (3) All civilians irrespective of religion and ethnicity must be protected in Myanmar. For that “safe zones” could be created inside Myanmar under UN supervision; (4) Ensure sustainable return of all forcibly displaced Rohingyas in Bangladesh to their homes in Myanmar; and (5) The recommendations of Kofi Annan Commission Report must be immediately implemented unconditionally and in its entirety.

On the issue of terrorism, the Prime Minister said terrorism and violent extremism have become a major threat to peace, stability and development. She denounced the use of religion to justify violent extremism. Sheikh Hasina reiterates her calls to stop supplying arms to the terrorists; stop terrorist financing; and settle all international disputes peacefully.

The Prime Minister also briefly dwelt on climate change and SDG issues, and made a fervent call to turn the world a abode of peace and harmony. “ I would like to say, we do not want war. We want peace. We want people’s wellbeing – not destruction of humanity. We want sustainable development. Let this be our collective goal,” she said in her concluding remarks.

PM in Washington

Concluding her UN schedule in New York, the Prime Minister went to Virginia on 22 September. But she fell ill there and underwent an surgery in her gall bladder on 25 September. She recovered fast and returned to the residence of her son on the next day. During her stay in Virginia, the Prime Minister exchanged views with the leaders and workers of Awami League in Washington.

Sheikh Hasina unveiled a bust of Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at the Bangladesh Embassy in Washington DC through video conferencing. Famous sculptor Stephen Weitzman built the bust made of bronze.

PM in London

Prime Minister left Washington on 2 September and reached London on 3 September on her way to Dhaka. She returned home on 7 September 2017. During her short stay in London, Sheikh Hasina also exchanged views with the expatriate leaders and workers of Awami League in Europe.



Full text of PM's address to the UNGA

Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

Mr. President,

As-salamu alaikum and good afternoon.

Let me extend my heartiest felicitations on your election as President of the 72nd session of the General Assembly. My delegation assures you of our full support in discharging your priorities on people, peace and planet.

Mr. President,

This is the 14th time I am addressing the UN General Assembly. And this time I have come here with a heavy heart. I have come here just after seeing the hungry, distressed and hopeless Rohingyas from Myanmar who took shelter in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. This forcibly displaced people of Myanmar are fleeing an 'ethnic cleansing' in their own country where they have been living for centuries.

I can feel their pain as I, along with my younger sister, had been a refugee for 6 years after my father, the Father of the Nation of Bangladesh Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and almost all members of my family were assassinated in 1975.

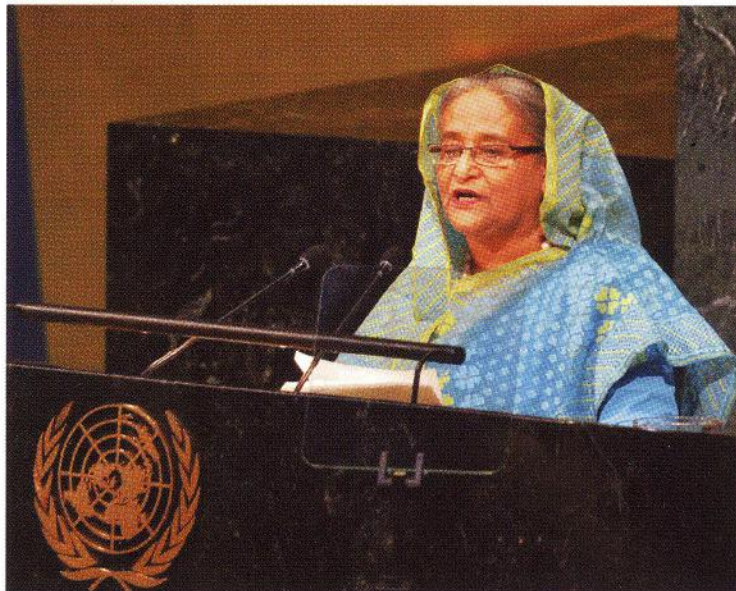
In 1974, in the first ever address of Bangladesh in this Assembly, my father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman said, "I know that the souls of our martyrs join us in pledging that the Bengalee nation fully commits itself to the building of a world order in which the aspirations of all men for peace and justice will be realized".

Mr. President,

We are currently sheltering over 800,000 forcibly displaced Rohingyas from Myanmar. The ongoing atrocities and human rights violations in the Rakhine State of Myanmar once again aggravated the situation at the Bangladesh-Myanmar Border. Hundreds of thousands of Rohingyas from the Rakhine State are entering Bangladesh to flee violence.

As estimated by IOM, in last three weeks over four hundred thirty thousand Rohingyas entered Bangladesh. We are horrified to see that the Myanmar authorities are laying landmines along their stretch of the border to prevent the Rohingyas from returning to Myanmar. This people must be able to return to their homeland in safety, security and dignity.

At the same time, I condemn all kinds of terrorism and violent extremism too. Our government maintains a 'zero tolerance' policy in this regard.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina addresses the 72nd UNGA Session, UNHQ, New York, 21 September 2017.

I thank the members of the Security Council and also the Secretary General for their proactive attempts to stop atrocities and bring in peace, and stability in the Rakhine State of Myanmar.

I further call upon the United Nations and the international community to take immediate and effective measures for a permanent solution to this protracted Rohingya crisis. In this regard, I propose the following actions:

First: Myanmar must unconditionally stop the violence and the practice of ethnic cleansing in the Rakhine State immediately and forever.

Second: Secretary General of the United Nations should immediately send a Fact-Finding Mission to Myanmar.

Third: All civilians irrespective of religion and ethnicity must be protected in Myanmar. For that "safe zones" could be created inside Myanmar under UN supervision.

Fourth: Ensure sustainable return of all forcibly displaced Rohingyas in Bangladesh to their homes in Myanmar.

Fifth: The recommendations of Kofi Annan Commission Report must be immediately implemented unconditionally and in its entirety.

Mr. President,

In the 1971 war of liberation, we endured an extreme form of genocide. In the 9-month-long war of liberation against Pakistan 3 million innocent people were killed and more than 200,000 women were violated. The Pakistan military launched the heinous 'operation searchlight' on 25th March which was the beginning of the 1971 genocide.

The 1971 genocide included targeted elimination of individuals on the ground of religion, race and political belief. The intellectuals were killed brutally. To pay homage to the victims of the genocide, our national parliament has recently declared 25th March as “Genocide Day.”

In Bangladesh, we have already undertaken the daunting task of bringing the key perpetrators to justice through the International Crimes Tribunal. I urge the international community to take collective actions to prevent recurrence of such heinous crimes anywhere anytime. I believe, recognition of past tragedies like the 1971 genocide would guide us to achieve 'never again'.

Mr. President,

Since our birth as a nation, we have pursued peace-centric domestic and foreign policies. With that spirit, Bangladesh has been taking the lead in tabling the resolution on “Culture of Peace” every year in the General Assembly since 2000.

We reaffirm the call for resuming the Middle East Peace Process, and for ending all forms of hostilities and discriminations against the brotherly Palestinian people.

In recognition of the potential role of the UN peace-building architecture, we look forward to bold and innovative proposals from the Secretary General on financing for ‘sustaining peace’. I am pleased to announce a token contribution of USD 100,000 from Bangladesh for the UN Peace-building Fund (PBF).



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina addresses High-level Side-event titled “Creating a Policy Vision for SDG Finance: Facilitating Private Sector Investment in the SDGs” organised by Bangladesh and Canada in partnership with UNDP, 20 September 2017.

Mr. President,

As a major troop and police contributing country Bangladesh underscores the importance of upholding effectiveness and credibility of UN peacekeeping operations. We shall maintain our own capability readiness, remain open to further smart pledges, enhance the scope of our peacekeeping training, and deploy more female peacekeepers.

We maintain a ‘zero tolerance’ approach to any allegation of sexual exploitation and abuse. As an endorser of the “Voluntary Compact” on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, I have committed myself to the Secretary General’s “Circle of Leadership” to combat this scourge. I am also pleased to announce a token contribution of USD 100,000 to the Victim Support Fund established for this purpose.

Mr. President,

Terrorism and violent extremism have become a major threat to peace, stability and development. Terrorists have no religion, belief or race. Having been a target of a number of terrorist attacks myself, I personally empathize with the victims of terrorism and appreciate their need for protection.

We denounce the use of religion to justify violent extremism. I have involved families, women, the youth, the media and religious leaders at the community level to offset the spread of violent extremism.

In this regard, I reiterate my calls:

First, stop supplying arms to the terrorists;

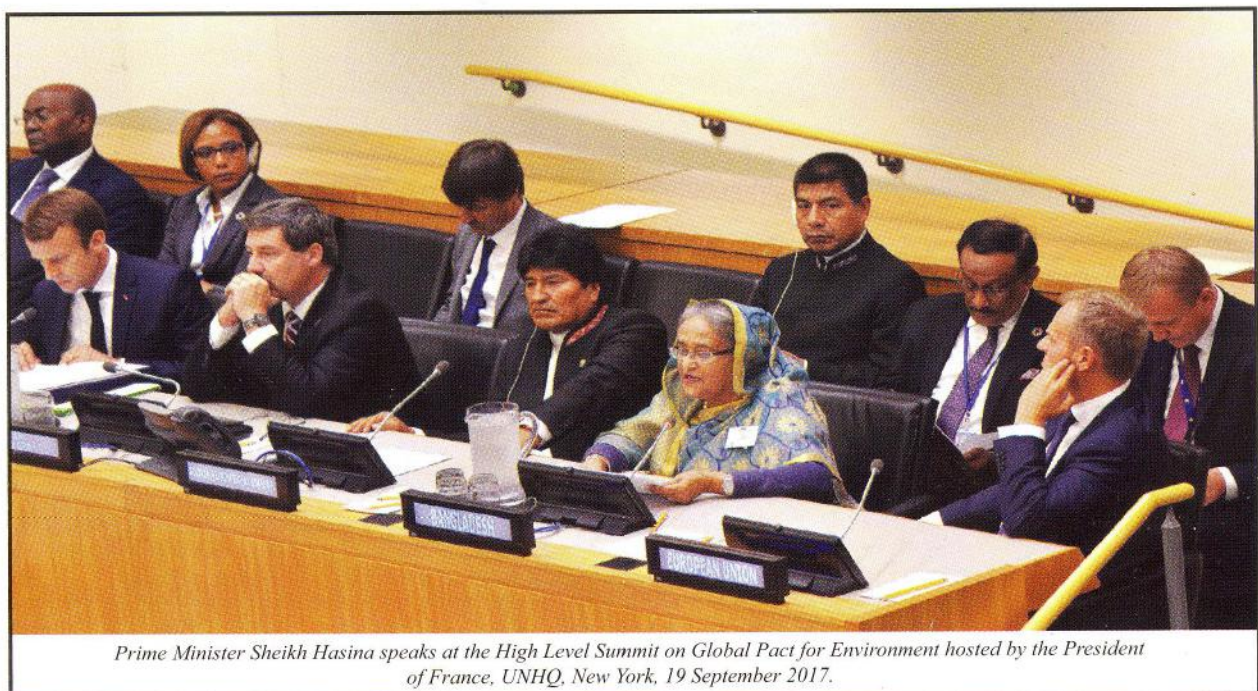
Second, stop terrorist financing; and

Third, settle all international disputes peacefully.

I also urge the UN to address the growing threats emanated from the cyber space to prevent money laundering, terrorist financing and other transnational organized crimes.

Mr. President,

We believe in promoting safe, orderly and regular migration. Last year we proposed developing a sound migration governance framework through the “Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration”. I am pleased that currently the UN is delivering on the formation of the compacts for migration and refugees.



Mr. President,

The Paris Climate Agreement remains our bastion of hope for climate justice. By recognizing the climate vulnerability, we are building resilience against the grave impacts of climate change. We believe in the potentials of “Blue Economy” in advancing the conservation and sustainable use of the ocean and seas.

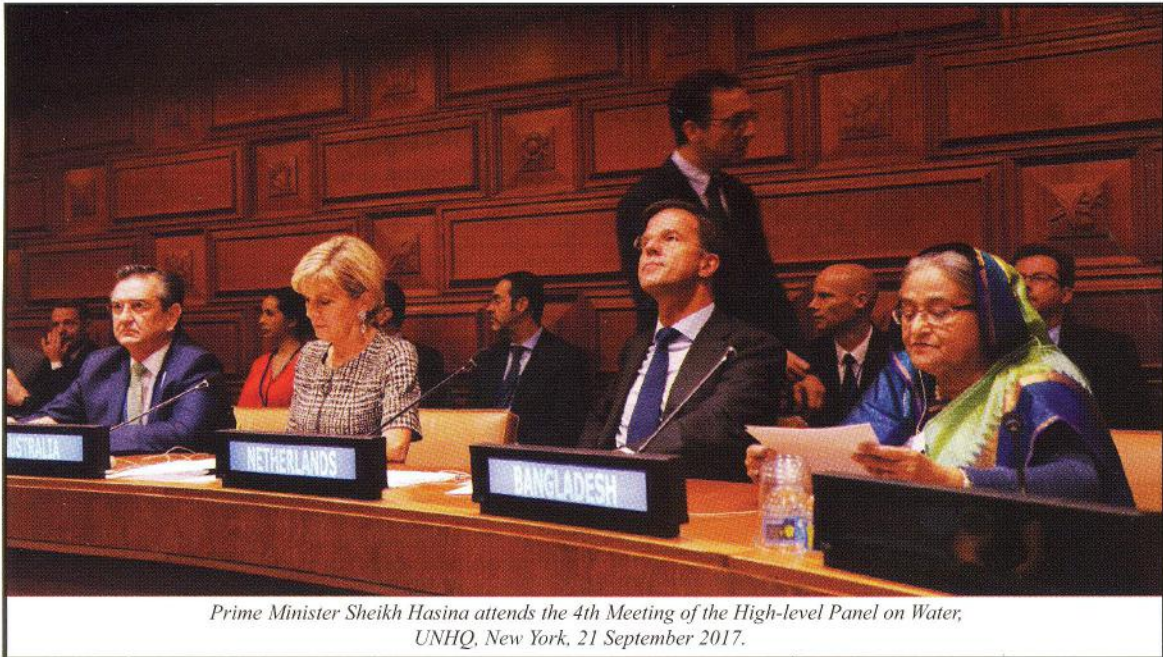
Bangladesh has achieved exemplary success in building resilience against flood and other disasters. Crop intensification and invention of water resistant crops have helped us achieve self

sufficiency in food. We have efficiently responded to the massive flood that has stricken the entire South Asian region this year.

As a member of the High-level Panel on Water, I attach high priority to implementing its comprehensive Action Plan. Bangladesh has ensured access to safe water for 87 per cent of its population by 2015, and we aim full coverage of our population by 2030.

Mr. President,

We believe that there are close interfaces between peace & stability and development. We share the conviction that addressing poverty, hunger, illiteracy, unemployment and inequalities is crucial for building peaceful, just and inclusive societies.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina attends the 4th Meeting of the High-level Panel on Water, UNHQ, New York, 21 September 2017.

We are committed to implementing the SDGs. For that, our Government has adopted a ‘whole-of-the-society’ approach. The SDGs complement our vision to transform Bangladesh into a middle-income country by 2021 and a developed one by 2041.

Even before the adoption of the SDGs we have initiated unique social programmes that reflect the themes of the SDGs, such as Ekti Bari Ekti Khamar (One Household One Farm); Community Clinic; Ashrayan (Shelter project); Digital Bangladesh; Education Support; Women Empowerment; Education for All; Social Safety Net; Environment Protection and Investment and Development.

Our “Voluntary National Review” presented to the UN this year showcased our progress and commitment for achieving the SDGs.

Mr. President,

In 2016-17, Bangladesh’s economy posted a GDP growth rate of over 7.24% and our foreign currency reserve reached USD 32.1 billion. We have brought down the poverty level from 56.7% in 1991 to 23.2% today.

Our per capita income is expected to grow to USD 1,602 by the end of the current fiscal year, which was only USD 543 in the FY 2005-06. Our life expectancy increased to almost 72 years. These figures, indeed, are indications of our inclusive development, in which no citizen is left behind.

To ensure inclusive growth, promote investment and employment opportunities for all, we have taken an initiative to develop 100 special economic zones around the country.

Our extensive social safety net measures give coverage to many vulnerable segments of our population, including elderly people, persons with disabilities, victims of domestic violence, and vulnerable mothers under economic hardship.

Special emphasis has been given to unlock the potentials of physically challenged children and people. 103 service and care centres along with 32 mobile therapy vans attend to the needs of persons with disabilities, including those affected by Autism. 18,500 community health clinics are being complemented by medical services through mobile phones and web cameras in districts and upazilas (sub-districts).

There is now a public primary school in every village of the country. 38,331 educational institutions have been equipped with digital laboratories and multi-media classrooms. Special emphasis is being given on promoting technical and vocational education and training for young people.

Mr. President,

Our youth are the main movers in realizing my vision for a knowledge-based ‘Digital Bangladesh’. We are working towards creating an environment to allow them to pursue transformative education, find decent jobs, and turn into truly global citizens.

I am happy to announce that Bangabandhu Satellite-1, which is our first ever satellite, is scheduled to be launched this year on our victory day 16th December.

Mr. President,

To conclude, I would like to say, we do not want war. We want peace. We want people’s wellbeing – not destruction of humanity. We want sustainable development. Let this be our collective goal.

I thank you.

Khoda Hafez.
Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu
May Bangladesh Live Forever.

Padma Bridge becomes visible as first span installed

More than one and a half years after the main construction work began, a 150-metre beam weighing around 32 MT has been installed on Saturday (30 September 2017) between pillars 37 and 38.



The much awaited Padma Bridge becomes visible as the first span installed between pillars 37 and 38, 30 September 2017.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader along with senior officials of the ministry and concerned departments was present at the installation ceremony. Quader told the media in Munshiganj that over 47 percent of the project has been completed.

The 6.15-kilometre bridge will have 42 pillars, including two on the banks. The construction of the bridge kicked-off in December 2015. The government expects to finish the project by late next year.

The minister said that the installation of beams between pillars will be formally inaugurated by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina after she returns from the US. "But the process has started as we don't want the construction to be halted, even for a moment."

Apart from connecting the country's southern region with the west, the bridge will also function as part of the proposed Asian Highway route. A 1.23 percent increase in Bangladesh's GDP is expected after the bridge becomes operational, according to government estimates.

The project was initiated in 1998 when the Awami League was in power, but it went into limbo when the party lost the general election in 2001. When the AL returned to power in 2009, it revived the initiative. Though the World Bank initially proposed funding much of the project, Bangladesh withdrew the funding request after the global lender raised a stink over alleged corruption.

The government led by Sheikh Hasina, however, remained steadfast and decided to go ahead with the project using Bangladesh's own resources.

In 2014, China's Major Bridge Engineering Company Ltd and Sinohydro Corporation Ltd were awarded contracts for the construction of the main bridge and the river training work.

To improve links between Dhaka and the bridge, a four-lane highway from Dhaka's Postogola to Munshignaj's Mawa and a 13km flyover from the capital's Shantinagar to Dhaka-Mawa Highway will be constructed, according to the Road Transport and Bridges Ministry.

Yes, we've proved, we can, Sheikh Hasina

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has expressed happiness at the installation of the first span of the Padma Bridge. "Yes, we've proved, we can... I'm very happy.... We, the Bangalee nation fought and liberated the country.... We can do whatever we want to do as we have honest will and determination."



Her jubilant reaction came when she was exchanging views with the leaders and workers of Awami League in Washington on 2 October. The PM recalled her government's decision to finance the mega project from state fund after the World Bank had withdrawn its loan on a "false and fictitious corruption charge".

“It was a big challenge, a big decision for Bangladesh [to finance the project with its own fund] as it was linked with the country's image.”

She congratulated all Bangladeshis at home and abroad for extending their support to help complete the dream bridge that would connect the country's southern region with the capital.

Myanmar proposes taking back Rohingyas from Bangladesh



Rohingya refugees forcibly displaced from their homeland in Rakhaine State, Myanmar waiting for enrolling to enter into the camps in Cox's Bazar.

Myanmar has formally proposed taking back the Rohingyas sheltered in Bangladesh. However, any specific procedure was yet to be offered on how the repatriation of such a massive refugee population should take place.

The visiting union minister for the Office of the State Counsellor of Myanmar Kyaw Tint Swe informed the intention of the Myanmar government during a formal talk with Bangladesh Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali in Dhaka on 2 October 2017.

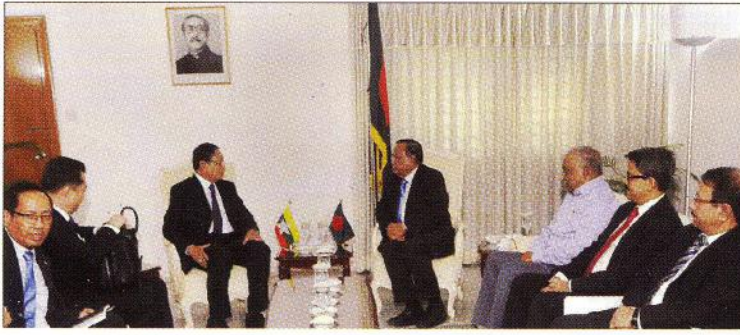
Bangladesh, on the other hand, proposed a bilateral agreement to facilitate the repatriation process and handed over a draft of the proposed deal to the State Counsellor.

The two sides also agreed to constitute a joint working group on the repatriation of Rohingyas but fixed no timeframe to complete its formation.

“We are looking forward to a peaceful solution to the crisis,” Mahmood said, adding that the working group will be formed soon. “I am hopeful.”



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina talks to a forced displaced Rohingya girl at a camp in Ukhiya, Cox's Bazar, 12 September 2017.



Foreign Minister AH Mahmud Ali holds meeting with the visiting Union Minister for the Office of the State Counsellor of Myanmar Kyaw Tint Swe in Dhaka, 2 October 2017.

The talks came at a time when Bangladesh is struggling to cope with an unprecedented influx, termed by the UN one of the fastest growing refugee crises in recent times.

More than 580,000 Myanmar minorities crossed over into Bangladesh since late

August to escape a military crackdown in Rakhine State. The UN has denounced the brutal army campaign as a “textbook case of ethnic cleansing”.

Dhaka and New Delhi sign \$4.5b Fresh Indian Credit

Dhaka and New Delhi have signed a \$4.5 billion credit agreement, the third of its kind since 2010. The first LoC of \$1 billion was signed on August 7, 2010 and the second LoC of \$2 billion in March last year.

ERD Secretary Kazi Shofiqul Azam and Managing Director of India's Exim Bank David Rasquinha signed the agreement on 4 October on behalf of Bangladesh and India in presence of Indian Finance Minister Arun Jaitley and Bangladesh Finance Minister AMA Muhit.

Seventeen development projects have been primarily identified for implementation under this credit line agreement. The projects include Buriganga River Restoration (New

Dhaleshwari-Pungli-Bangshi-Turag-Buriganga river system) with an estimated allocation of \$196 million and upgrading of 245km roads -- Benapole-Jessore-Narail-Bhanga (135km), Ramgarh-Baruerhat (35km) and Mainamati- Brahmanbaria-Sarail (75km) -- with an estimated allocation of \$225 million.

Of the credit, around \$500 million would be used for setting up three economic zones for Indian and other investors.

Some \$100 million will be allocated for building a dedicated economic zone spanning 1,005 acres in Mirsarai of Chittagong. Another \$100 million may be used for developing a special economic zone at Payra



Bangladesh and India sign a \$ 4.5 billion Indian Credit in presence of visiting Indian Finance Minister Arun Jaitley and Bangladesh Finance Minister AMA Muhit in Dhaka, 4 October 2017.

or Maheshkhali and \$300 million for developing infrastructure of different economic zones.

The other projects include Payra port multipurpose terminal (\$350 million), construction of new dual gauge rail-line from Bogra to Shaheed M Mansur Ali Station in Sirajganj (\$501 million), development of an inland container terminal in Ishwardi (\$35

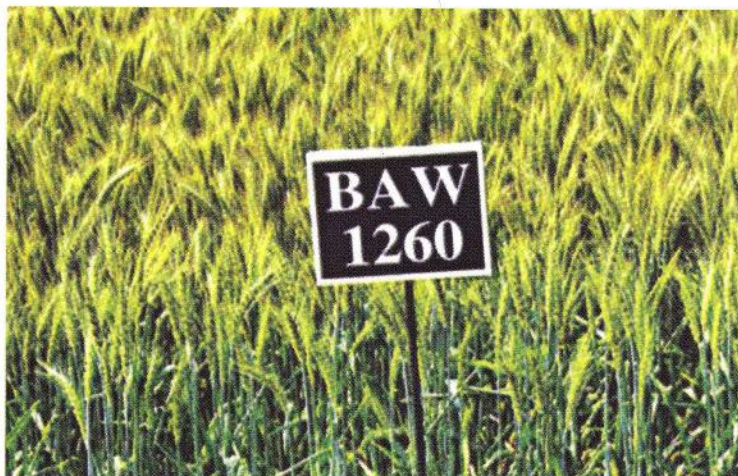
million), Bogra-Jharkhand (India) 400 KV transmission line project (\$177 million), and Gazipur 450MW combined cycle (gas/LNG based) power plant (\$402 million).

At the signing ceremony of the third Line of Credit (LoC), visiting Indian Finance Minister said this is the biggest-ever credit New Delhi has given to any country.

Bangladeshi scientists develop wonder wheat

Fungus-resistant, zinc-rich variety to bring smile to growers

Bangladeshi scientists have developed a new variety of wheat which is enriched in micro-nutrient zinc and fungus resistant. Scientists at the Wheat Research Centre (WRC) in Dinajpur have long been trying to develop a homegrown wheat variety that would be rich in zinc content.



HarvestPlus, a global biofortification mission launched in 2004 under the Washington-based Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, provided WRC with the much-needed support.

And a wheat line -- BAW 1260 -- was almost ready for release as a variety with promise of containing 55 parts per million zinc as against 40 ppm in other existing varieties.

But then wheat blast struck Bangladesh for the first time early last year and again had a recurrence early this year, damaging substantial wheat acreage. Scientists at WRC started re-breeding the promising wheat line so that they could develop a variety rich in zinc and also resistant to blast. And success came their way.

Convinced, the National Seed Board (NSB) gave approval to the new variety last week naming it as "Bari Gom-33".

With a high yield potential (4.6 tonnes per hectare), Bari Gom-33 is also the most promising and productive wheat variety Bangladesh has ever bred. It has got bold grain with a white amber colour, high zinc content and blast resistance.

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